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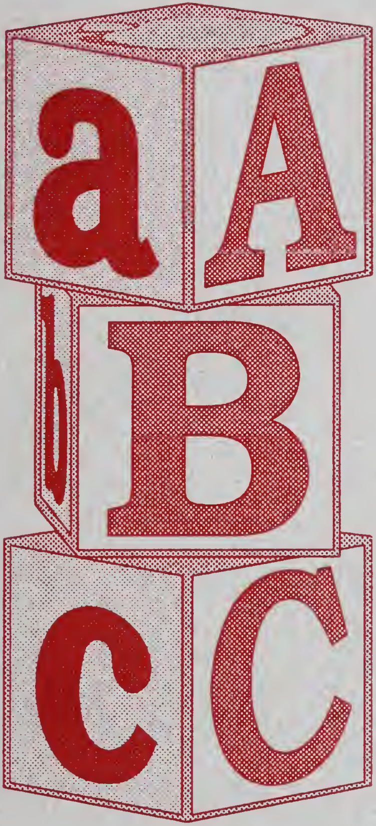

The Illinois
Department
on Aging

The ABCs of Satisfaction Surveys

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

Purpose 1

Who to Survey 1-2

How to Survey 2-11

- Method 2-3
- Sample Size 3-4
- Selecting a Sample 5-6
- Interview Questions 7

How to Summarize Data 12-18

- Frequency Distribution 12-13
- Averages 13-16
- Ranges 16-17
- Comparing Subgroups 17-18

How to Evaluate Responses 19-20

What's Next? 20-22

What IDoA/CCP Want to See During QI Review . . 23

ABC's Of Satisfaction Surveys

Purpose

A satisfaction survey is a tool that can be used by your agency to measure the quality of your services. This guide is being provided to assist in the development of your agency's satisfaction survey. The results of a survey can enable your agency to measure the effectiveness of delivered services, and isolate service patterns across regions, clients and staff. The request for feedback demonstrates quality to payers and assists in keeping and bringing customers. A satisfaction survey is also a means to improve staff and client morale and promote organizational pride.

Your contract with the Illinois Department on Aging (IDoA) may require that you develop and use a satisfaction survey(s) to assess service. If you offered to administer a satisfaction survey when you applied for a Community Care Program (CCP) contract (in your application), the Department will expect to see the results of your effort when it conducts a Quality Improvement (QI) review of your contract. (See page 23 for more detail on Department expectations).

Who to survey?

An agency conducting a satisfaction survey will want to gather information from a variety of people or agencies that are involved with the provided services. Clients are a good source of information, but satisfaction surveys do not have to be limited to only one group. Other groups can be asked to help evaluate your agency. You might consider surveying:

- Clients (current as well as past);
- Family (current as well as past);
- Staff (direct service, administrative);
- Other community agencies with which you do business;
- Records (client, service, billing, worker); and/or
- Visitors (Adult Day Care, Senior Center).

How to survey?

Method

It is best to keep the survey short, so that the respondent takes no longer than fifteen minutes to complete the questionnaire. The longer the questionnaire and the more time it takes to complete, the more likely the respondent will lose interest.

There are three methods to conduct a survey:

- **Personal interview** - This can be an expensive method, taking a lot of staff and time. Biased responses can result in a personal interview due to face-to-face interaction. It is generally difficult for someone to be completely honest about his/her feelings, especially if it is not favorable, to an agency representative. Therefore, responses tend to be more favorable when the personal interview is used.
- **Telephone** - Surveys conducted over the telephone can also lead to bias similar to the personal interview. This method tends to produce higher

scores than a survey conducted by mail. This method will also take a lot of time but reduces the travel time involved in a personal interview. On the other hand, there may be phone charges.

- **Mail** - This method produces the least amount of bias. Surveys that are sent through the mail allow the respondent to remain anonymous. Mailing the survey is more economical than either the personal interview or telephone survey in terms of staff time involved. However, there is a cost to the agency for the purchasing postage, envelopes, etc. The fact that the return rate with a mailing is only 1/3 to 1/2 should be considered. A low number of responses is another cost to the agency.

Confidentiality is an important factor. You are more likely to get true feelings from respondents if they feel they will remain anonymous. There may be hidden fears of losing service, service changing, or some other type of retribution due to any negative response they may want to express about the agency. Assuring confidentiality will help to elicit honest responses from those who are participating. If possible, the person conducting the survey should be impartial, for instance, a student intern. In addition, you should not assign numbers or other identifiers to surveys before they are distributed.

Sample Size

A sample is the group of people who will be participating in the survey. It should be representative of the total population. Enough people need to be involved in order to get different opinions and views on issues, and to be able to determine if others have the same feelings that are being expressed. The sample size is a determining factor in the accuracy of the data gathered. If your sample is too small, the data will not give a clear picture.

You will need to have a minimum of 30 to 40 responses from the survey. Remember, if mailing a survey, the return rate is only 1/3 to 1/2. Therefore, if you mail out 40 surveys, you may only get 13 to 20 surveys back. If the population you are proposing to sample is less than 100, then survey all (100%). The general formula to determine the percentage to survey is 100 divided (/) by the number of clients multiplied by 100 to equal the percentage. General formula: 100/# of clients * 100 = percentage.

Examples: The population being surveyed are clients of the agency.

You have a total of 100 clients.
100/100 clients * 100 = 100%
You will need to survey all 100% of your clients.

You have a total of 200 clients.
100/200 clients * 100 = 50%
You will need to survey 50% of your clients.

You have a total of 300 clients.
100/300 clients * 100 = 33%
You will need to survey 33% of you clients.

Important Guidelines for Determining a Sample Size

- *A minimum of 30 to 40 responses.*
- *The return rate of surveys is generally 1/3 to 1/2.*
- *If less than 100, do all (100%)*
- *General formula to determine percentage* to survey:
  (100/# of clients) * 100 = percent

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Selecting a Sample

There should be a process for selecting a sample in which you would choose a percentage of your client population based on the general formula previously described. People should not be selected to participate in a survey because they happen to be convenient to contact, or because they will give the answer you want to hear. Remember, a sample is representative of the total population you want to survey. For example, if you want to determine how your clients' view the services they are receiving, a sample of your total client population should be surveyed. There are different methods by which a sample may be selected.

Methods by which a sample may be selected:

- **Random** - Sample selection using this method is organized and structured. Use the general formula to determine the percentage to survey; if your agency has 200 clients, you would want to survey 50% or 100 clients. An example of a random sample would be using an alphabetical listing of all your 200 clients and selecting every other person to participate. Another way to get a random sample would be to use a listing of your client's social security numbers and selecting every other number. Then the person with that social security number would be survey participant.

- **By Time** - A set interval of time is designated and a person in that time interval is selected as a part of the sample. Examples of samples selected by time are clients served on Wednesday, all clients when they discontinue service, or all clients who are due for a redetermination in a particular month.

- By Category (Block) - A category is a group that has a similar quality. For example, categories can be determined by a variable such as sex, time on program, impaired level, etc. You may want to use sample selection by category when you have reason to be concerned that certain groups will think, feel or behave differently. For instance, you may want to conduct a survey with a sample of the population who receives home delivered meals in addition to homemaker services. In this case, your survey will be designed to explore issues connected with home delivered meals. To select a sample by category, first determine the category. Once the category has been selected, arrange the people within the category, such as alphabetical order or by social security number. Then randomly select your sample within that arrangement. Remember to use the general formula to determine the percentage of people that should be surveyed.

Important Guidelines to Selecting a Sample

- ***Random*** *- This method is organized and structured, and achieves the goal of a representation of the total population surveyed.*

- ***By Time*** *- This method is based on selecting a sample based on a designated set interval of time.*

- ***By Category*** *- This method involves selecting a sample from a group with similar characteristics, such as gender.*

Interview Questions:

Question Content: The content of the questions in a survey is very important. How the reader interprets the question determines the response. Therefore, questions must ask for information that you and your agency would like to explore. The questions in a survey should be specific. The language used should be familiar to the person who is to respond. Try not to use words that the reader does not understand. For example, you would not discuss the laws of physics with an infant; similarly, you should not use organizational terminology or acronyms in a survey designed for client usage. Design questions regarding the issues which the agency would like to learn about.

☹ Bad Questions: Questions that are not specific and are free for individual interpretation are difficult to summarize and evaluate. The intent should be evident in order to get the information you are requesting from the respondent.

Here are some examples of non-specific questions:

☹ Are you satisfied with your worker?

☹ Are you satisfied with your service?

These are bad questions because the client says yes or no, and you still do not know why the client feels that way.

☺ Better Questions: Questions should be asked so it is clear to the respondent what is being asked.

Here are some examples of some specific questions:

☺ My worker always arrives on time? (client selects a response ranging from strongly agree to strongly disagree)

☺ I have to remind my worker what I need done? (client selects a response from strongly agree to strongly disagree)

☺ What do you like best about the day care center? (client fills in the answer)

Important Guidelines to Question Content.

* *Be specific.*

* *Language should be familiar to the person being asked to respond.*

* *Keep questions related to issues regarding what your agency would like to learn.*

Responses to Questions: Responses should be designed to get the most accurate information possible from the respondent. Here are some examples of different types of responses to questions.

Yes/No

Avoid using yes/no questions unless they are followed with "please describe." Additional information is generally needed to understand the response.

Example: Question - Has your worker ever been late? Yes, please describe or No.

Answer - "Yes, my worker was late, but she had a flat tire and apologized. This was the only time she was late."

Open Ended

Open ended questions allow the respondent to be more in depth with his/her answers; they do not limit a person to a few set choices. Unfortunately, open ended questions are harder to summarize.

Example: How does it make you feel if your worker is late?

The respondent has the opportunity to explain his/her feelings, e.g. angry, frustrated, worried....

If you use open-ended questions, the best way to summarize is to:

1. write down each different response;

2. when you come to a response similar to one you have written down, put a hash mark beside the written answer; and

3. the answers can then be arranged using a frequency distribution (see page 12).

Example: How does it make you feel when your worker is late?

angry llll (4)
scared ll (2)
worried ~~llll~~ lll (8)
do not care l (1)

Scaled

Scaled responses give the respondent several choices on how to answer the question and ask them to choose the most appropriate. There needs to be enough options to get a variation. Remember, some people are reluctant to use the most positive or most negative response, so a three point scale should not be used.

Examples of a scaled response.

5-Point Scale

1 = Strongly Agree
2 = Somewhat Agree
3 = Neither Agree or Disagree
4 = Somewhat Disagree
5 = Strongly Disagree

7-Point Scale

1 = Strongly Agree
2 = Moderately Agree
3 = Slightly Agree
4 = Neither Agree or Disagree
5 = Slightly Disagree
6 = Moderately Disagree
7 = Strongly Disagree

Important Guidelines to Question Responses

* *Avoid yes/no questions unless followed by a "please describe."*

* *Open ended questions allow for more in depth responses, but are harder to summarize.*

* *Scaled responses give the respondent several choices, but there needs to be enough options to get a variation.*

Record Review: Record reviews can answer important questions about service quality as well as accuracy of documentation and compliance with rules/regulations.

Types of records that may reveal important information.

* Staff to client ratios
* Attendance at training sessions
* Service delays/interruptions
* Absenteeism
* Scheduling
* Responses to complaints
* Responses to family/client requests
* Health changes and follow up
* Required forms and time frames
* Care plan costs (case managers)
* Referrals
* Activity by worker
* Worker paid hours versus reimbursed service hours (efficiency)

How to summarize data?

Once the surveys are completed it is time to pull the responses together and summarize the findings.

Frequency Distribution

A frequency distribution can be done by counting the number of times a response was used for each question. A frequency distribution will show you how many people in the sample respond the same way. Then you will be able to see if responses are weighted to the positive or negative or evenly distributed.

Example: My worker always arrives on time.

Score	# Selecting	Total %
1 strongly agree	9	10%
2 somewhat agree	17	18.9%
3 neither agree or disagree	21	23.3%
4 somewhat disagree	33	36.7%
5 strongly disagree	10	11.1%
Total	90	100%

There were five choices the respondent was able to use to best describe his/her feelings. There were 9 respondents who strongly agreed with the statement, 17 respondents somewhat agreed, 21 respondents neither agreed nor disagreed, 33 respondents somewhat disagreed, and 10 respondents strongly disagreed. If you add the total number of responses, it will give you a total number of people who responded to the statement. The total in this example is 90. Now, to get the percentage of the responses, you will need to determine the number of people with the same response/the total number of people who responded to the question.

strongly agree	9/90 = 10%
somewhat agree	17/90 = 18.9%
neither agree or disagree	21/90 = 23.3%
somewhat disagree	33/90 = 36.7%
disagree	10/90 = 11.1%

This shows us that the response somewhat disagree had the highest percentage; in other words, 36.7% of the sample indicated somewhat disagree with the statement "My worker always arrives on time."

Averages

Averages can be done by adding the total of the responses to a question, then dividing by the number of respondents.

Example: My worker always arrives on time.

Client	Response Score
#1	3
#2	4
#3	1
#4	3
#5	4
Total 5 clients	15

Explanation: There were five clients who responded to this statement. Client #1 responded with a 3 (neither agree or disagree), #2 responded with a 4 (somewhat disagree), #3 responded with a 1 (strongly agree), #4 responded with a 3 (neither agree or disagree), and #5 responded with a 4 (somewhat disagree). Then adding their responses together (3+4+1+3+4 = 15) gives a total of 15. An average is the total response score/the number of clients. The average for this example would be calculated by taking 15/5 = 3. The average score would then be 3. This can then be interpreted that the average response was to neither agree or disagree.

Often it is not enough to look at averages alone; looking at averages and frequency distributions together will give a clearer picture of the results. Here is an example of using an average and a frequency distribution together to obtain a better look at the whole picture.

Example: My worker uses my phone for personal phone calls.

Average:

Client	Response Score
#1	1
#2	5
#3	1
#4	5
#5	5
Total 5 clients	17

Again we add the response scores (1+5+1+5+5 = 17) to get the total of 17. The average will be calculated by taking the response score total/number of clients = the average. For this example 17/5 = 3.4, and then 3.4 would be considered the average score. This can be interpreted that the average score is neither agree or disagree. However, none of the 5 clients answered neither agree or disagree. This example shows that you should look beyond averages for a data summary.

Frequency distribution:

Score	# Selecting	Total %
1 strongly agree	2	40%
2 somewhat agree	0	0
3 neither agree or disagree	0	0
4 somewhat disagree	0	0
5 strongly disagree	3	60%
Total	5	100%

Explanation: This example uses the same method as the previous frequency distribution. There was a total of 5 responses, 2 strongly agree and 3 strongly disagree. To get the percentage you take the number of people who responded the same way/the total number of people who responded to the question.

strongly agree	2/5 = 40%
somewhat agree	0/5 = 0
neither agree or disagree	0/5 = 0
somewhat disagree	0/5 = 0
strongly disagree	3/5 = 60%

This frequency distribution tells us that 60% of the people who responded to this statement strongly disagreed, and 40% of the people who responded strongly agreed. In comparison to the average using the same data, the results are conflicting. The average score is neither agree or disagree, and the frequency distribution shows us that 0 people responded to the question with that selection. This example shows the importance of using a frequency distribution along with averages in summarizing data.

In this example, the frequency distribution clearly reveals that clients either strongly agree or strongly disagree. There seems to be no "middle ground." If you were to get a result like this, you might begin to wonder why there are such large differences, and what is so different between the two groups of clients.

Using Ranges:

Sometimes it is easier to group data. For example, if you used a seven point scale, you might want to group the data as follows:

Scores on a 7 point scale

(1-2) = strongly agree and moderately agree

(3-4-5) = slightly agree, neither agree or disagree, and slightly disagree

(6-7) = moderately disagree and strongly disagree

Scores on a 5 point scale

(1-2) = strongly agree and somewhat agree

(3) = neither agree or disagree

(4-5) = somewhat disagree and strongly disagree

This would group the respondents who were in general agreement, those who were "on the fence," and those who were in general disagreement, and may give a clearer picture. Grouping scores can also assist in reducing the bias some have against responding with the most positive or most negative answer as it was discussed in Responses to Questions.

Another type of range is a time range. These are useful if you are grouping clients or workers by time in service or on the job.

Time on job:
(0 up to 6 mos.)
(6 mos. to 1 yr.)
(1 to 5 yrs.)
(more than 5 yrs.)

Comparing Sub-groups

Another method to summarize the data you have on the completed surveys is to compare sub-groups. This example represents the lengths of time the worker has been on job and the client's average response to "my worker always arrives on time." In this case the surveys have asked the client how long they have been receiving services from the agency. The responses are then grouped into a timeframe; 0-6 months, 6 months-1 year, 1-5 years, or more than 5 years. Now with the surveys grouped by the client's time receiving services, an average is taken for each group on the statement, "My worker always arrives on time."

Example: My worker always arrives on time. (This question is designed with a 7 point scale as shown previously).

Time on Job	Average Client Response
0-6 mos.	5.5 (most slightly disagree)
6 mos.-1 yr.	4.2 (neither agree or disagree)
1-5 yrs.	3.5 (most slightly agree)
more than 5 yrs.	2.7 (most moderately agree)

Explanation: Here you can see that the longer the worker has been on the job, the more likely the client is to rate the worker as always arriving on time.

Important Guidelines to Summarizing Data

* *Frequency distribution examines the number of times a response is given for a question.*

* *Taking averages for the responses does not always give an accurate picture. The use of frequency distributions can help support or discount out averages.*

* *Ranges can be used to group data and assist to eliminate bias toward using strongly agree or strongly disagree.*

* *Comparing sub-groups can be useful in establishing relationships.*

How to evaluate responses?

After the responses have been summarized, the results can be used to evaluate systems. The data can reveal problem areas and strengths of an agency. Particular attention should be paid to high frequency numbers. These are identifying that the concerns or feelings are wide spread throughout the population being surveyed. Comparing sub-groups will help the agency determine if there may be a relationship between certain sub-groups and responses. This enables the agency to have insight to why problems may be occurring.

The summarized data will also allow for comparisons of performance to standards such as time from referral to service and time from appointment to assessment. The data can also be used to compare the performance to state-wide numbers if available.

Look at the data from a variety of perspectives, based on hypotheses you have or can develop. Be careful about other possible explanations. Although you may have an explanation that seems to be reasonable, there may be other circumstances involved. An example would be comparing the length of time a worker is on the job and the worker arriving on time. According to the previous example, it appears that the longer the worker is on the job, the more likely the worker will be there on time. This may lead you to conclude that if workers stay on the job long enough, they become more timely. This may not be the case. Another explanation could be that the client has had service by that worker for a long time and overlooks his/her being late, or the client may fear the possibility of losing that worker if he/she reports differently or, it may be that workers who do not arrive on time get fired or quit. There may be instances when two or more different explanations can result in the same findings.

Do not try to compare your data with that of other agencies. Even if questions are identical, factors in how the other agency administered the survey may vary. For instance, one agency may have mailed the survey to promote confidentiality and the other may have completed personal interviews with the survey. The difference in the methods used to conduct a survey could result in a noticeable variation in outcomes.

You should not try to use your data to evaluate individual staff. Not only will this violate your efforts to respect the confidentiality of the persons who responded to the survey, but will also lead to biased evaluations. Each supervisor needs to evaluate staff using established criteria, not a client satisfaction survey.

What's next?

After the data has been evaluated, target one or more areas for improvement. Do not try to work on everything at once. Choose an area based on what appears to be the worst problem or the most important to organizational goals. Try something to make improvements in the identified area or areas. Sometimes just sharing the data with agency staff causes a change in behavior. For example, if the survey results showed a trend throughout the population that workers do not arrive on time, making staff aware of the problem may change their behavior patterns. The survey can be repeated, generally known as a post-test, to enable the agency to compare the results with the initial survey, generally known as a pre-test. After evaluating the post-test survey, compare the responses for changes or trends. This can show an agency if the intervention used to try and improve an area had any effect.

Important Guidelines to Pre-test and Post-test

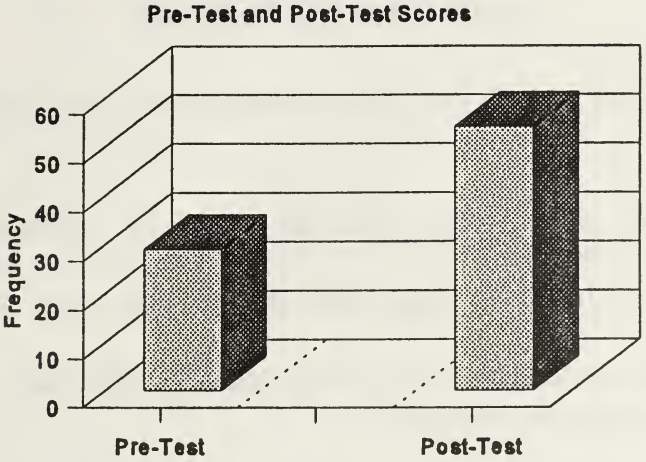
- The pre-test is your first survey.

- Summarize and evaluate data from the pre-test, target areas for improvement and initiate intervention. For example, share the results of the survey in a staff meeting).

- Then administer the second survey, which is your post-test, some time later.

- Look at the results of the pre-test and post-test for any trends or improvements.

Diagram



This diagram illustrates the frequency distributions for the response "strongly agree" and "somewhat agree" grouped together for the survey statement, "My worker always arrives on time" on both a pre-test and post-test. The horizontal axis is the pre-test and post-test. The vertical axis shows the percentage of the frequency distribution for the responses, "strongly agree and somewhat agree." When the percentages for the two responses are totaled together for each survey, they can be plotted on the graph as shown above. The pre-test survey had 29% respond strongly agree or somewhat agree to the statement "My worker always arrives on time." The post-test survey had 54% respond strongly agree or somewhat agree to the same statement. This indicates an improvement in how the respondents feel about their workers' timeliness. The diagram indicates this positive trend. As satisfaction surveying continues, summarized data can be added to the diagram to show trends over a period of time.

What does IDoA/CCP want to see during a QI review?

IDoA/CCP will want to look at the whole process of the satisfaction survey.

* What your agency did in terms of collecting data. Reviewers will want to look at the survey, learn who received it, how many respondents there were, etc.

* Summarized data using frequency distributions, averages, or comparing sub-groups.

* What the agency decided to try to improve. Reviewers will want to look at the areas or issues identified by the survey that the agency is working on or has worked on for improvement.

* What the agency did to try to improve. Reviewers will want to look at the interventions that were used or are going to be used by the agency to work towards improvement in the identified issues or areas.

* The effect of what the agency did (change over time). Reviewers will want to look for any evidence of an improvement or if the intervention used created some change.

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